

Unique Lives and Experiences- TORONTO
2011 Speaker Biographies:



Alexandra Cousteau (Oceanographer, “Blue Legacy”)

Monday Feb 7, 2011 @ 730pm

Roy Thomson Hall

Blue Legacy is an initiative started in 2008 by Alexandra Cousteau to engage individuals around the world through telling the story of our water planet. Blue Legacy works to: to help shape society’s dialogue to include water as one of the defining issues of our century; to inspire people to take action on critical water issues in meaningful ways. People throughout the world are increasingly aware that our environment is changing: natural resources are disappearing, pollution is widespread, the climate is becoming more volatile, diseases spread more rapidly, and ways of life are vanishing. Water is at the heart of these issues and is the primary vehicle through which climate change will be felt. Blue Legacy is a catalyst for action and change—promoting ideas for innovative solutions that individuals and communities around the globe can implement to address the issues facing our water planet. A dedicated environmentalist, Cousteau advocates the importance of conservation, restoration and sustainable management of water resources for a healthy planet and productive societies. A member of the third generation of the Cousteau family to devote their lives to exploring and explaining the natural world, Cousteau first went on expedition with her father, Philippe Cousteau, when she was four months old, and learned to scuba dive with her grandfather, Jacques-Yves Cousteau, when she was seven.[1][4] She grew up traveling the globe, developed a passion for adventure and learned firsthand the value of conserving the natural world. Of her father and grandfather, Cousteau says, "The best example they gave me was the importance of living a life of consequence, value, and meaning. I honor their memories by creating a legacy of my own in speaking out for the preservation of our blue planet and all its waters."



Irshad Manji (Author/ Professor, "The Trouble with Islam Today")

Monday March 7, 2011 @ 730pm

Roy Thomson Hall

The New York Times describes Irshad Manji as "Osama bin Laden's worst nightmare." Oprah's magazine has given Irshad the first annual Chutzpah Award for "audacity, nerve, boldness and conviction." She takes both as compliments. Through her commitment to Muslim reform, Irshad is putting these principles into practice. She is the internationally best-selling author of *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith*. Her book has been published in more than 30 countries, including Pakistan, India, Lebanon and Indonesia - the world's largest Muslim nation. In those countries that have censored *The Trouble with Islam Today*, Irshad is reaching readers by posting free translations on this website. Collectively, the Arabic, Urdu and Farsi editions have been downloaded more than one million times. The Indonesian edition has become the most popular download on this website since its launch last year. As a scholar beyond NYU, Irshad is Senior Fellow with the European Foundation for Democracy. She has served as a Visiting Fellow at Yale University and Journalist-in-Residence at the University of Toronto, where she wrote *The Trouble with Islam Today*. Irshad is creator of the Emmy-nominated PBS documentary, "Faith Without Fear," which chronicles her journey to reconcile Islam with human rights and freedom. *Faith Without Fear* is now being screened across Europe and South Asia. It's also circulating in the Muslim underground via digital technologies.

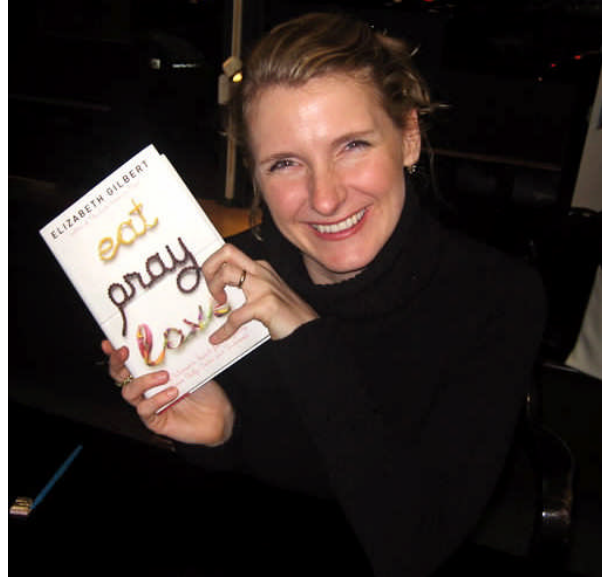


Rita Moreno (Performer, "West Side Story")

Monday March 28, 2011 @ 730pm

Roy Thomson Hall

Rita Moreno (born December 11, 1931) is a Puerto Rican-American singer, dancer and actress. She is the first and only Hispanic and one of the few performers who have won an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar, and a Tony and at the time the second Puerto Rican to win an Academy Award. She had her first Broadway role—as "Angelina" in *Skydrift* --by the time she was 13, which caught the attention of Hollywood talent scouts. She appeared in small roles in *The Toast of New Orleans* and *Singin' in the Rain*, in which she played Zelda Zanners, a fictional silent screen vamp. In 1956, she had a supporting role in the film version of *The King and I* as Tuptim, but disliked most of her other work during this period. Besides appearing in *Singin' in the Rain*, *The King and I*, *Summer and Smoke* (1961), *West Side Story*, *The Night of the Following Day* (1968) and *Carnal Knowledge* in (1971), Moreno appeared on the PBS children's series *The Electric Company* in the 1970s, most notably as Millie the Helper. In fact, it was Moreno who screamed the show's opening line, "HEY, YOU GUYS!" She also had roles as the naughty little girl Pandora, and as "Otto", the very short-tempered director. Moreno appeared in the family variety series *The Muppet Show*, and she made other guest appearances on television series such as *The Rockford Files*, *The Love Boat*, *The Cosby Show*, *George Lopez*, *The Golden Girls*, and *Miami Vice*. She was also a regular on the short-lived sitcom version of *Nine to Five* (based on the film hit) during the early 1980s.



Elizabeth Gilbert (Journalist/ Novelist, "EAT PRAY LOVE")

Monday April 11, 2011 @ 730pm

Roy Thomson Hall

Esquire published Gilbert's short story "Pilgrims" in 1993, under the headline, "The Debut of an American Writer". She was the first unpublished short story writer to debut in Esquire since Norman Mailer. This led to steady work as a journalist for a variety of national magazines including, SPIN, GQ, The New York Times Magazine, Allure, Real Simple, and Travel + Leisure. As stated in the memoir, *Eat, Pray, Love*, she has made a career as a highly-paid freelance writer who financed her world travel with a substantial publisher's advance because, "she had no job to quit because sampling Roman restaurants, Indian meditation centers and Indonesian oceanfront bars pretty much was her job." Her 1997 GQ article, "The Muse of the Coyote Ugly Saloon", a memoir of Gilbert's time as a bartender at the very first Coyote Ugly table dancing bar located in the East Village section of New York City, was the basis for the feature film *Coyote Ugly*. She adapted her 1998 GQ article, "Eustace Conway is Not Like Any Man You've Ever Met", into a biography of the modern naturalist, *The Last American Man*. It received a nomination for the National Book Award in non-fiction. "The Ghost", a profile of Hank Williams III published by GQ in 2000, was included in Best American Magazine Writing 2001.

Most recently, she published *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia* (Viking, 2006), a chronicle of her year of spiritual and personal exploration while traveling abroad. The memoir was on the New York Times Best Seller list of non-fiction in the spring of 2006, and in October, 2008, after 88 weeks, the book was still on the list at number 2. Subsequently she appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. The book was optioned by Columbia Pictures, with Julia Roberts starring as Gilbert and was produced as *Eat Pray Love* in 2009. It was released on August 13, 2010. The sequel to her memoir, entitled *Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage*, was released by Viking in January 2010.



Joan Rivers (Comedian/ TV Personality, “A Piece of Work”)

Monday May 16, 2011 @ 730pm

Roy Thomson Hall

Joan Rosenberg aka Joan Rivers (born Joan Alexandra Molinsky is an American comedian, television personality and actress. She is known for her brash manner, her loud, raspy voice with a heavy New York accent, as well as her numerous cosmetic surgeries. Rivers's comic style relies heavily on poking fun at herself and other celebrities. A documentary film about Rivers, *Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work*, premiered at the San Francisco International Film Festival at the Castro Theatre on May 6, 2010. Rivers has spoken of her primary *Tonight Show* life as having been Johnny Carson's daughter, a reference to his longtime mentoring of her and, during the 1980s, establishing her as his regular guest host by August 1983. It was not her only work, however. On April 9, 1983, she hosted *Saturday Night Live*. In the same period, she released a best-selling comedy album on Geffen Records, *What Becomes a Semi-Legend Most?* The album reached No. 22 on the U.S. *Billboard* 200 and was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Comedy Album. Rivers and daughter Melissa were contestants in 2009 on the second *Celebrity Apprentice*. Throughout the season, each celebrity raised money for a charity of his or her choice; Rivers selected *God's Love We Deliver*. After a falling out with poker player Annie Duke, following Melissa's on-air firing (elimination) by Donald Trump, Rivers left the green room telling Clint Black and Jesse James that she would not be in the next morning. Rivers later returned to the show and on May 3, 2009, she became a finalist in the series. The other finalist was Duke. On the season finale, which aired live on May 10, Joan was announced the winner and was hired to be the 2009 *Celebrity Apprentice*. Rivers was featured on the show *Z Rock* as herself. Rivers was also a special pink carpet presenter for the 2009 broadcast of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade. She was roasted in a Comedy Central special, taped on July 26, 2009, and aired on August 9, 2009. Joan stars in a new reality TV series on TV Land called *How'd You Get So Rich?*, which began airing in August 2009.



Barbara Walters (Talk Show Host, "20/20 & The View")

Monday June 6, 2011 @ 730pm

Roy Thomson Hall

The name Martha Stewart is synonymous with creative and stylish living. Millions of consumers rely on Martha Stewart as the arbiter of style and taste and their guide to all aspects of everyday living. Martha's unique business sense and vision is the framework for Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. On June 6, come hear her life story. From her early years in modeling to her first business in catering and beyond, you'll learn how determination and strength can build an empire. Martha is an innovative entrepreneur and a role model for women all over the world.